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SENSITIVE  
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, DRL; NSC FOR  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)  
SUBJECT: ACEH PEACE BOLSTERED BY ELECTIONS

REF: JAKARTA 654 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan. It is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Aceh Province confounded those worried about violence on election day by carrying out legislative elections notable only for lack of incident. Early informal poll indicators are that the party of former separatists, Partai Aceh (PA), could have a majority in the provincial legislature (DPRD). The Aceh Governor is pleased with how the election was conducted but remains vigilant that the vote count proceeds fairly in coming days. Overall, election day gave a strong dose of confidence for peace in Aceh. Septel reviews the situation nationally. END SUMMARY.

GOOD NEWS IN ACEH

¶3. (SBU) Despite a tense run-up to elections in Aceh, polls ran smoothly throughout the province on April 9, according to observers, NGOs, journalists and officials we contacted on April 10. More than three million voters went to 62,000 polling stations to vote for 38 national parties, plus the six local parties allowed to contest local legislative bodies--a process unique to Aceh under the terms of the 2005 Helsinki peace MOU. Governor Irwandi Yusuf told the press, "I was confident that the situation would be safe. Although there are some high-risk areas, these do not reflect the province as a whole. Those who plan to jeopardize the elections likely will be shunned by the community."

OBSERVERS AGREE ELECTION PEACEFUL

¶4. (SBU) This view was reaffirmed by many authoritative organizations. National Democratic Institute (NDI) data from 600 polling stations representing a cross-sample of Aceh found little election day intimidation and no violence. A ConGen Medan survey of local officials, journalists and NGOs confirmed this. The Carter Center, with seven observers spread across key areas, said it detected "none of the red flags" expected when elections are flawed. The Japanese Embassy told us the "election was run professionally." Former conflict hotspots, where election-related violence occurred in the run-up to elections, were all peaceful with no major complaints.

¶5. (SBU) At the provincial legislature (DPRD) and district legislature (DPRK) levels, the PA (main party of former Free Aceh Movement or GAM), got a clear majority of the vote along the densely populated east and west coasts, PA strongholds. Two other local parties are competing for runner-up honors: SIRA (party of Vice Governor Muhammad Nazar) and the Aceh People's Party (PRA).

## MINOR FLAWS

¶6. (SBU) Only small glitches were reported. Spoiled ballots delayed voting in some districts but officials resolved the problems. Thousands of voters were not registered in some communities in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh and western Aceh, but journalists told ConGen these were primarily newly arrived migrants who were still listed in their home districts. SIRA Party claimed PA forced SIRA witnesses out of the polling stations in several places. PA said anti-PA propaganda was disseminated near polling places in Southwest Aceh District the night before elections, a violation of rules. Forum LSM (an Aceh NGO coalition) told a poll observer that some voters were intimidated by persons standing in line behind them. Other intimidation was mostly by PA against several other leading parties.

¶7. (SBU) The Governor told ConGen that he is still wary that the vote could be manipulated during the recapitulation stage--the vote is counted first in front of witnesses at the polling places and then recounted at the sub-district level. Witnesses get tired and are less vigilant at this stage. Irwandi also thanked ConGen for all the elections-related training the USG provided and Mission's observation support.

## YUDHOYONO PEACE STANCE POPULAR

¶8. (SBU) President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat (PD) strongly dominated the Aceh vote for the national legislature, early poll organizations reported to ConGen. PD did very well in PA strongholds, people identifying Yudhoyono with Aceh peace

JAKARTA 00000657 002 OF 002

and support for the Helsinki peace MOU process. The Muslim/secular party National Mandate Party (PAN) polled second, followed by the Islamic-oriented Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), which did well in major cities, particularly Banda Aceh.

¶9. (SBU) The vote count for the local Aceh legislatures will not be announced until the evening of April 10. This announcement will signal whether PA will take control of the provincial parliament, a development that makes some government officials nervous because of an exaggerated belief that PA would pursue a referendum for Aceh independence. Another repercussion of a strong PA showing would be reinvigorated calls for a separate province in the central highlands of Aceh by the anti-GAM ethnic Gayo and Javanese population, which dominate in that region. On the other hand, a poorer than expected showing by PA would upset the more strident ex-GAM members.

¶10. (SBU) Over all, the elections seem to have contributed greatly to continued peace and stability in Aceh, but there is still a real need to observe developments in the coming days after the final results become clear. Septel reviews the situation nationally.

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